

## FAST FACTS

- \* Sign your new cards as soon as they arrive.
- \* Avoid signing a blank receipt, whenever possible. Draw a line through blank spaces above the total when you sign card receipts.
- \* Save your card receipts to compare with your billing statements.
- \* Open billing statements promptly and reconcile your card accounts each month, just as you would your checking account.
- \* Report promptly and in writing any questionable charges to the card issuer.
- \* Never lend your card/s to anyone.
- \* Never give your number over the phone unless you are initiating a transaction with a company you know is reputable.

Everyone pays for credit and charge card fraud in higher prices, whether or not they are personally defrauded.

While theft is the most obvious form of credit and charge card fraud, fraud occurs in other ways, as well. For example, someone may use your card number (not the card itself) without your permission. This may occur in a variety of ways:

- \* A thief rifles through trash to find discarded receipts or carbons to use the card numbers illegally.
- \* A dishonest clerk makes an extra imprint from your credit card or charge card for his or her personal use.
- \* You receive a postcard or a letter asking you to call an out-of-state number to take advantage of a free trip or a bargain-priced travel package. When you call, you are told you must join the travel club first. You are asked for your credit card number so you can be billed for the membership fee. The catch? New charges continue to be added at every step and you never get your free or bargain-priced vacation.

## HOW TO GUARD AGAINST CREDIT AND CHARGE CARD FRAUD

Here are some **suggested precautions** you can take to help protect yourself against credit and charge card fraud. You also may want to instruct any other person who is authorized to use your account to take the same precautions.

Sign your new cards as soon as they arrive.

Carry your cards separately from your wallet.

Keep a record of your card numbers, their expiration dates, and the phone number and address of each company in a secure place.

Keep your card in view, whenever you can, after you give it to a clerk. Retrieve your card promptly after using it.

Always keep your credit cards in a safe place. Check periodically to make sure that none are missing.

Avoid signing a blank receipt, whenever possible. Draw a line through blank spaces above the total when you sign card receipts.

Don't leave your receipt in the bag when you have made a purchase.

Void or destroy all carbons and incorrect receipts.

Save your card receipts to compare with your billing statements.

Open billing statements promptly and reconcile your card accounts each month, just as you would your checking account.

Report promptly and in writing any questionable charges to the card issuer.

Notify card companies in advance of a change in address.

Cut up your expired or cancelled credit cards before you throw them out.

Destroy anything with your credit card number on it before you throw it away.

In addition, here are some things you should **not** do:

Never lend your card(s) to anyone.

Never leave your cards or receipts lying around.

Never put your card number on a postcard or on the outside of an envelope.

Never give your number over the phone unless you are initiating a transaction with a company you know is reputable. If you have questions about a company, check with your local consumer protection office or Better Business Bureau before ordering.

Never give out your Social Security number over the phone to someone you don't know.

Don't print your Social Security number on your checks.

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CARDS ARE LOST OR STOLEN

If your credit or charge cards are lost or stolen, call the issuer(s) immediately. Most card companies have a toll-free number for reporting missing cards. Some companies provide 24-hour service. By law, once you report the loss or theft, you have no further liability for unauthorized charges. In any event, your maximum liability under federal law is \$50 per card.

## What To Do About Suspected Fraud

If you suspect that someone has illegally used your credit card, Report it to the police and call the card issuer immediately. Use the special telephone number that many card issuers list on their billing statements. You also may want to follow up your phone call with a letter.

You may be asked to sign a statement under oath that you did not make the purchase(s) in question, but you cannot be required to do so.

You should also contact the three major credit reporting agencies to alert them to the fraudulent use of your card. They have special fraud units established to assist consumers. They are Equifax (800-685-1111), Trans Union (800-888-4213), and Experian (800-682-7654). You can contact the Associated Credit Bureaus web site at [www.acb-credit.com](http://www.acb-credit.com).



The Indiana Department of Financial Institutions, Division of Consumer Credit has many other credit related brochures available, such as:

- Answers to Credit Problems
- Applying for Credit
- At Home Shopping Rights
- Bankruptcy Facts
- Buried in Debt
- Car Financing Scams
- Choosing A Credit Card
- Co-Signing
- Credit and Divorce
- Credit and Older Consumers
- Deep in Debt?
- Equal Credit Opportunity
- Fair Credit Reporting
- Fair Debt Collection
- Gold Cards
- Hang up on Fraud
- High Rate Mortgages
- Home Equity Credit Lines
- How to Avoid Bankruptcy
- Indiana Uniform Consumer Credit Code
- Look Before you Lease
- Mortgage Loans
- Repossession
- Reverse Mortgage Loans
- Rule of 78s – What is it?
- Scoring for Credit
- Shopping for Credit
- Using Credit Cards
- Variable Rate Credit
- What is a Budget?
- What is the DFI?

Call our toll-free number or write to the address on the cover for a copy of any of the brochures listed or for further consumer credit information. You can also access information at our web site on the Internet: <http://www.dfi.state.in.us>, then click on Consumer Credit.



# CREDIT & CHARGE CARD FRAUD



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